

Peter Thomas

# The Caravan Holiday



Peter Thomas

# The Caravan Holiday



## CONTENTS

[Imprint](#)

[Chapter one](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

# IMPRINT

All rights of distribution, also through movies, radio and television, photomechanical reproduction, sound carrier, electronic medium and reprinting in excerpts are reserved.

© 2015 novum publishing

ISBN print edition: 978-3-99048-104-2

ISBN e-book: 978-3-99048-105-9

Editor: Louise Darvid

Cover images: Golasza, Luis Louro, Geografika | Dreamstime.com

Coverdesign, Layout & Type: novum publishing

[www.novum-publishing.co.uk](http://www.novum-publishing.co.uk)

## CHAPTER ONE

So that's it then! I've just recently had my tenth birthday, an event that I try not to think back to. So ten! Double figures. I guess I'm not a youngster anymore. I'm ten! TEN!!!!!! The best years of my life have gone - in a flash. I hardly noticed them slipping away. Ten! What is there to look forward to now? Just the long, slow path to old age. Where did the years go?

Yes. That just about sums me up. One of the world's greatest pessimists. Glass half empty, that's me. Grass is always greener etc. etc. For a start there's the name. Tom Thompson. I mean, imaginative or what? I can picture them at the maternity hospital holding me in their arms and saying, "We don't need books of names. We've come up with something original that he'll grow to love. We'll call him Tom." Did they ever put the two names together and think that Tom Thompson is not a name I would grow to love. I suppose I should be lucky that it is Tom and not Thomas. That would be an even worse burden to have to carry round. Of course I get called all the names - Tom Tom, Tommy Gun, Misery Guts, mainly from Dad that one, but the one that seems to have stuck is Tommo. I don't mind that. Tommo. It has a ring to it, so I'm happy with that. Well, when I say happy, let's not get carried away. Let's just say that it makes me feel a little less miserable.

So apart from the name, why else is my life so dark? Let's look at the evidence. First of all, I'm an only child. The strain of thinking up my name must have been too much for my parents to have to go through with it again. No brothers



or sisters to play with, to share things with, to laugh and joke with, but mainly to blame things on. If anything goes wrong or gets broken it's me that gets the blame. Okay, that's usually because it is my fault, but it would be nice, once in a while to say, "Oh no, it wasn't me. It was Tim." If I had a brother he's bound to be called Tim. It's that imagination thing again.

Then there's the friends, or lack of them. Sure, I have people at school that I know and hang about with. Yes, I have a group of colleagues I walk to and from school with. But would I call them friends? No, not really. I couldn't see me inviting any of them round for tea, although that would make my mum the happiest person in the world. "Why don't you invite a friend over for tea?" That's her daily question. My daily answer should be, "Because, Mum, I don't have any." But that would probably turn her into a blubbering wreck. The people I know like to play football and charge around or play on their violent computer games. I don't like any of that. I like ... trains! Yes, laugh. Call me sad, anorak, train spotter. I don't care. I just love trains. I love the look of them, the sound of them, the smell of them. What do I want to be when I grow up? Yes, a train driver. I dream of driving trains. I play at driving trains. I imagine people's admiring looks as I speed past. "Aaah," they'll say, "there goes Tommo the train driver. What a man!" Maybe that's a bit far-fetched but I can but dream. So that's what I look forward to in this autumn of my life, I am ten you know, driving trains.

Then there's the main reason why my life is like it is, so full of despair. My parents. To be fair Mum is okay. She's Mum. She'll do anything for anybody. That's one of the problems because it usually involves me. She helps with

charities. All charities. Doesn't matter what it's for. If it's got the word charity anywhere in its information, Mum's in. Can't tell you how many weekends I've spent stood outside some well-known high street store with a tin trying to collect money for endangered mealworms in Central Africa or against the destruction of dandelions in South America. If it's a charity, Mum's there ... with me. "Look sad and pitiful, Tom." Well, that's easy. And she fusses. "Put your gloves on and wrap your scarf tight. Button your coat up. Have you got your thick socks on?" Me pointing out that if it's that cold I shouldn't really be stood in the street waving a tin at people has no effect. But, apparently, according to my colleagues, that's what Mum's do. They fuss. It's just something else I'll have to put up with, I suppose.

Then there's Dad. Now, that's a different kettle of fish altogether, although why anyone would keep fish in a kettle is beyond me. Must make the tea taste awful. Dad is fine when he's at work. No problem at all. Hardly know he's there, mainly because he isn't. But when he's at home! You remember that guy Midas? Everything he touched turned to gold. Well, Dad is similar to Midas, except that everything he touches turns into a disaster. He fixed the washing machine, which immediately blew up and sent soapy water gushing all over the kitchen floor. Oh, we did laugh. Well, I did. Mum's reaction was rather different. I never realised she knew such words. They certainly weren't very charitable words. Then he put some shelves up. They turned out to be fine until you put something on them. Hours to put up, seconds to fall down and bring half the wall with them. And don't mention his shed!

The worst thing about Dad is the fact that he insists on doing things as a family. That seem okay to you? It's what

families usually do. Sort of cosy and nice. But with Dad it's a major operation doing anything. It all has to be planned out to the minutest of details. And then you can guarantee that it will all go pear shaped. How you know it's shaped like a pear is beyond me. The words to put fear into even the strongest of creatures is when Dad says, "I've planned something for us all to do together."

"I've planned something for us all to do together," said Dad, cheerfully, on that fateful Sunday morning. I could picture goldfish leaping out of their bowls all over the country on hearing that news while cats threw themselves into rivers. Mum sighed. I was more dramatic. I buried my head in my hands.

"It'll be great," continued Dad unaware of the impending doom felt by his audience.

"What is it?" asked Mum with a definite lack of enthusiasm. This obvious apathy was missed by Dad who went on.

"When I was a boy we went on a great holiday to North Wales." No response from us. "In a caravan." Dad seemed to miss my clearly audible groan and continued. "It was great. The site had everything." Not electricity, surely. Not when Dad was a boy. "Amusements, shops, a super park and it was right by a fantastic beach. Golden Sands it was called. I've been looking at it on the internet and last night I went on the website and booked a caravan for the week." My groan was even more audible this time. Mum looked just the same as she did when the washing machine blew up.

"You've done what? Didn't you think of consulting me first?"



“You’d only have said no,” replied Dad. Good for Mum I say. “Anyway, it’s too late now. It’s all booked. We go on Saturday. I’ve taken a week off work specially.”

“Next week,” said Mum. “What about my charity work?” Good one, Mum.

“Charity starts at home,” quipped Dad. One all. “Besides, this site has a charity shop. And it has a miniature railway.” Two-one. Game, set and match Dad. So that was it. Dad had booked a holiday. In a caravan. In North Wales. What could possibly go wrong?

The packing. That’s what could go wrong. Mum went into a frenzy. I know for a fact that Mum has wardrobes, cupboards and drawers full of clothes. Or so Dad says. He mentions it a lot. In fact, if Mum gave half her clothes away to charity she could save all the mealworms and dandelions single handed. But, no. She was adamant that she would need more.

“It’s a holiday,” she repeated over and over. “I need holiday clothes.”

Don’t ask me what the difference between holiday clothes and ordinary clothes are. I’m sure that there will be a definition in some obscure dictionary somewhere.

“And a new bikini.”

That did it. To save me from thoughts that would turn milk sour I left and decided to sort my own packing out. It seemed easy enough till Mum turned up and stated that we were going for a week and not just one day. Sarcasm, Mum. Not a good quality. So that was my packing done for me. I only hoped that she didn’t expect me to carry the case. As I’ve said, I’m passed my best and carrying that case would certainly have finished me off. She could have entered it as one of the rounds in The Strongest Man in the World

competition. Even then I think that most of them would have struggled to complete the hundred metre course.

Dad had done slightly better in Mum's eyes. He'd managed to pack enough for three days. Once again Mum took over and so that was his packing done. To make up for our packing inadequacies Mum decided to take enough for three months. She'd need a separate caravan just for her clothes. Dad made a comment about only having a car and not an articulated lorry. I thought it was amusing. Mum didn't.

Then, of course, staying in a caravan we needed food for the week. Again, Mum's idea of what was needed for a week differed greatly to Dad's, but we've learnt that Mum is always right, if you wanted a quiet life, that is. And me and Dad did. And her choice of food! She'd bought things we'd never eaten before in our lives. Three tins of sardines! Why sardines? We've never, ever had sardines. No one in our family has ever sat at the dinner table, looking at a roast dinner and sobbing bitterly because they'd rather have sardines. But there they were. Three tins. I'm not even sure I know what sardines are. Plus luncheon meat. Not ham, or beef or pork. Luncheon meat. That's meat in a tin.

"You'll like it," said Mum, menacingly.

My view was that if I liked it then I would have asked for it before now. Dad mentioned the articulated lorry gag again but it fell on deaf ears.

So, the fateful day approached. The day that only Dad had been looking forward to. He spent much of his time with a map plotting routes or with a pad planning one of his famous itineraries. Mum spent a lot of her time watching holiday programmes and saying things like, "That looks

nice," when anything that wasn't a caravan holiday came on. I just sat there envisaging myself ending my days in a caravan. I mean, being in the house with Dad when he's got ideas is bad enough, but in a caravan! Where do you go? Where is there to hide? You're trapped! A captive audience. My world got bleaker and bleaker. Dad, of course, didn't notice my doom laden mood. Comments such as, "This is going to be great fun," and "This is going to be really exciting," did nothing to cheer me up.

## CHAPTER TWO

The morning of our departure came. By the time I awoke from a very fitful sleep the car was packed. Mum had been very thorough and had managed to fit everything in. Dad mentioned something about not being able to find the kitchen sink, a comment that Mum ignored. My main concern looking at the car was where I was going to sit as the majority of the back of the car resembled a removal van. Maybe they had decided not to take me. Perhaps they thought that I would be better off at home, on my own, rather than suffering torture in a tin can by the sea. My mood lifted slightly.

“There’s plenty of room,” Mum pointed out.

My mood dropped again. Yes, there was plenty of room, if I started a diet that meant you lost two stone in ten minutes.

“We’ll just shuffle a few things around. You’ll be as comfy as anything.”

As comfy as those sardines squished into their tin.

Breakfast was a quick affair. Dad wanted to “beat the traffic.”

“It’s not a race,” said Mum. “We’ll take our time and not rush.”

Dad said something under his breath but, again, Mum chose to ignore it.

Soon we were sat in the car, ready to go. Well, Mum and Dad were sat in. I was sort of propped in between two boxes of totally alien food products. A box of porridge stared up at me. Porridge! I’ve never had porridge in my

life. I don't think Mum and Dad have ever had porridge. Yet, there it was, next to a tin of macaroni cheese. Why?????

"Are you okay at the back there?" said Mum. "Not too squashed?"

The obvious answer was, "Yes. I am too squashed." Being squashed is bad enough, but being too squashed takes the biscuit, and there were plenty of those in the boxes. Fig rolls! I ask you. I half expected someone from The Guinness Book of Records to turn up and say, "Yes. We'll put you in the book. Nobody has ever managed to get a person in the back of a car with all these boxes. Congratulations. Have a certificate." Of course, I knew it was pointless to say anything, mainly because Mum had disappeared out of the car to check the house once more.

Dad seemed to be getting a little restless. "We'll never beat the traffic," he muttered to himself, as he drummed his fingers on the steering wheel. Eventually Mum returned.

"Are you sure you don't want to go back and Hoover the goldfish or give the living room a quick wallpaper?"

I found that quite amusing, especially coming from Dad, but Mum chose to ignore it - again.

"Right!" said Dad, as he adjusted his seat. "Let's go. Do you think you can direct me to the motorway?" He passed a map over to Mum.

"Of course I can," replied Mum, although her voice gave me the impression that she wasn't very confident. "Which one is the motorway?" I was right.

"The long, blue one," pointed out Dad, and we were off. All went well, until ...

“That’s a river! Look! Water! How can you think that’s a motorway?” We’d been going about twenty minutes when Mum said, “Turn left at this bridge,” and it all kicked off.

“You said the long, blue one and that’s where we are,” said Mum, coolly.

“At the river! How can you mix up a motorway with a river?” Quite easily it would seem in Mum’s case. Dad was getting into his stride now. “One’s wriggly and one’s a straight line. Who do you think I am? Jesus? Shall I drive along the water? At least we’ll beat the traffic.”

Now despite the fact that Jesus didn’t drive on water, he walked, I still found it funny. Twice in one day. Well played, Dad. Mind you, it would have made the story more interesting if Jesus had turned up at the Sea of Galilee, or wherever it was, in a Renault Clio. I chuckled to myself, which didn’t go down too well with Dad.

“Oh, yes. It’s hilarious,” said Dad.

I wouldn’t say it was hilarious, just funny.

“Perhaps we should let Tom read the map.” Mum turned to me. “Do you think you could tell the difference between a river and a motorway on a map when they’re both blue?”

Well, actually I could but common sense told me not to admit it.

“You have the map,” grunted Mum, thrusting it at Dad. “Just in case I direct you headlong into the Pacific Ocean.”

Geography is not one of Mum’s strong points. I’m sure Dad could have passed some comment about our present location and the whereabouts of the Pacific Ocean but he kept quiet. Very wise. Mum didn’t look in the mood for a geography lesson.

The next couple of hours or so were pretty quiet. We found the motorway without getting wet so I sat back, or as



far back as I could get among the piles of luggage. The outside world sped past as the car ate up the miles, a thought which suddenly made me feel hungry.

"I'm hungry," I said, the first words that had been spoken for quite some time.

"Well, get something to eat," replied Dad.

An excellent idea. The obvious solution. Now, what shall it be? Porridge? Macaroni cheese? Fig rolls? What about those scrummy sardines? Mum brought Dad back to reality.

"The packing up is in the boot. We'll have to stop for a bite to eat." This suggestion, however sensible, didn't seem to go down too well with Dad.

"Oh, yes. Hang on. I'll just pull up over at the side here. Oh, I forgot. We're on the motorway. We can't just stop!"

"Well, turn off, then, and we'll find somewhere. Or just pull in at the next services."

There was a brief muttering of beating the traffic from Dad but Mum ignored it and he accepted that her last comment was not a suggestion but an order. So, the services it was.

We pulled in and stopped in the car park, after Dad had driven round a couple of times trying to find what he called a suitable place. Mum went to the back of the car and came back with a coolbox. Considering Dad wasn't keen on stopping he certainly worked his way through the contents of the coolbox. I ate my food cautiously. I was seriously concerned about putting any weight on while I was sandwiched, clever turn of phrase there, between the boxes. I looked at my wafer thin ham between the two slices of bread and thought, "I know exactly how you feel."

"Well, we may as well go to the toilets while we're here," suggested Dad, "and then, hopefully we won't need to stop

again.” He looked accusingly at me and Mum. Mum was not just an expert at ignoring pointed comments, but it seems she was just as good at ignoring accusing looks too.

I’ve been to motorway services before and I am always amazed at how many people they can cram into one. Why Dad should worry about beating traffic was beyond me because most of the traffic was here.

“Just like ants,” commented Mum, as she gazed at the throng of people scurrying around. None of the people I saw had six legs and feelers which made Mum’s comment sound silly, but again this was a private observation and not one I shared with Mum. Dad and I walked straight into the toilet while Mum joined her queue at the ladies. I’ve never understood why women have to queue for the toilet. Dad said the same thing. Maybe one day someone will come up with a scientific answer.

Toilet done with we stood outside and waited for Mum to join us. Dad kept looking at his watch and muttering, “We’ll never beat the traffic now.”

We’ll have that put on his gravestone. I could imagine Dad at the pearly gates with St Peter looking at a huge sundial and shaking his head. “Didn’t beat the traffic then,” St Peter would bellow. I imagine that St Peter would bellow. He looks the sort that would bellow.

A considerable while later Mum reappeared clutching a magazine. You know the sort of thing. “I Married A Man With Two Heads” was the headline on the cover. It’s the sort of nonsense Mum believes must be true because it says so on the cover of a magazine. If the headline was “I Married A Man With Six Legs And Feelers” it would be more realistic.